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ABSTRACT

Intended for use by parents of learning-disabled children, this curriculum was developed in response to a needs assessment completed by parents. Presented in a workbook format, each chapter offers guidelines and specific activities to encourage parents to identify specific social skills problem areas and to plan change strategies. Chapter 1 discusses how surroundings affect a child's behavior and how the parent can make changes in the home and community environment to facilitate success. Chapter 2 suggests ways the parent can help the child understand and do what other people request of him. Chapter 3 deals with how children can learn to solve problems and covers teaching through modeling, using problem solving steps, and the importance of timing. Mechanisms for teaching the child to cope with frustration and conflict are presented in chapter 4. Finally, chapter 5 deals with motivating the child to use appropriate social behavior. Includes seven references. (DB)

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TEACHING SOCIAL SKILLS TO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN:

A Parent's Guide

Interstate Research Associates

October 1989

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INTRODUCTION

Good social skills are important to everyone. They enable us to get along with others, form friendships, hold jobs, and work with others toward mutual goals. These are the skills that help us act with others in a way that is socially acceptable and that benefits ourselves and others, without harming anyone else.

As adults, we have learned how to use our verbal and nonverbal behaviors to get positive responses from others and to obtain pleasure from our interactions. Children, as well, learn and use social skills with a variety of people, including parents, teachers, and peers. Not all children are able to do this; for example, some children with learning disabilities may find social skills particularly difficult. Often, because of their disabilities, these children have difficulties in identifying what behaviors they need to be accepted by peers, family, and others. They often have trouble understanding the rules of conversation and adopting someone else's point of view. In addition, they might find it difficult to recognize meaning in others' behaviors. These problems may affect all the interactions these children have, and are thought to be related to difficulties in understanding nonverbal communication, in knowing what actions are socially appropriate, and in having the motivation and self-control to act appropriately.

In 1986, Interstate Research Associates received a three-year grant from the U.S. Department of Education to develop and evaluate strategies for families of children with learning disabilities to use to cope with their children's behavior problems and social skill deficits. This curriculum for parents of school-age children is one of the products of that grant. A curriculum for young children is also available and a curriculum module is planned for adolescents and young adults. The materials were developed in response to needs identified by a representative sample of parents of children with learning disabilities. The selected parents completed a Learning Disabilities Needs Assessment Checklist in the spring of 1987. The checklist was designed to identify social skills and behavior problems of children with learning disabilities, as perceived by their parents, and to determine parents' training needs.

Parents were asked to respond to three areas of concern: 1) their child's skill levels in various social skill areas, such as giving compliments, listening to others, following directions, and sharing belongings; 2) the severity of their child's negative behaviors, such as criticizing and making negative comments, refusing to talk, arguing with other children, demanding attention, and stealing; and 3) their child's behavior in potential problem situations, such as going to the doctor, riding in the car, doing homework, and interacting with their brothers and sisters.

When the results of the Needs Assessment Checklist were analyzed, it was found that, for the school-aged population, three social skill problems affected over 50% of the parents surveyed. The social problems were discussing differences without getting angry, continuing to try when frustrated, and following directions. The analysis also revealed that these problems occurred in a wide range of everyday situations and that a close relationship existed between the most common social skills deficits and the most common behavior problems.

Based on these results, the goal of this curriculum is to provide parents with a guide for teaching needed social skills to their learning-disabled children and for addressing related behavior problems in their children's home environment. Chapter 1 discusses how surroundings affect a child's behavior and how you can make changes in the home and community environment to help the child succeed. Chapter 2 includes ways you can help your child understand and do what other people request of him. Chapter 3 deals with how children can learn to solve problems. Mechanisms for teaching your child to cope with frustration and conflict are presented in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 deals with motivating your child to use his best social behavior.

Remember that, as a parent, you were the first and remain the most consistent "teacher" of your child. All the positive things that you do for and with your child help him grow and learn more effectively. Some children, however, present more challenges even to the best of parents, and "teaching" them the skills they need requires extra creativity, work, and information. We hope that this curriculum will serve these needs.

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CHAPTER 1

SETTING UP THE ENVIRONMENT FOR SUCCESS

Topics in this chapter include:

* Identifying Antecedents
* Changing the Setting
* Scheduling Activities
* Using Reminders

Anyone who has walked into a loud and crowded, smoke-filled room--or sat beneath a tree by a gurgling stream--recognizes that our environment influences our behavior. Children are especially influenced by different settings, because they haven't learned adult ways to adapt to new settings. While we can help our children learn to adapt to different settings, we can also make the child's environment as conducive to success as possible. This chapter details how we, as parents, can look at the home and community through our child's eyes, and make some changes that will help him to behave in a more socially acceptable manner.

IDENTIFYING ANTECEDENTS

Many things in your child's environment "signal" a particular behavior. We call these signals antecedents. Actually, an antecedent is any thing which occurs before a behavior. The noise of a crowded room, a ringing telephone, and the laughter of another person are examples of events or conditions that might be antecedents to a behavior. In a noisy room we talk louder, when the telephone rings we answer it, and when someone laughs we smile. All of these events affect our behavior.

In many cases, you can change a child's behavior by changing the antecedents to the behaviors. To do this, "step back" and look at your child's environment to see if you can identify the conditions or events that are currently controlling his behavior. Is your child easily distracted by noises? Is his behavior affected by how cluttered or messy a room is? Can you think of anything in the environment that has a calming effect on your child? Knowing the answers to questions like these is a major step towards helping your child improve his behavior around other people. Activity 1.1 assists you in identifying conditions in a setting that may affect your child's behavior.

ACTIVITY 1.1

What is it about the following settings that affects your child's behavior?

A museum

_____

_____

A long car ride with the family

_____

_____

A severe thunderstorm

_____

_____

A mall

_____

_____

An evening alone with one parent

_____

_____

An arcade

_____

_____

Sometimes, a written description of the behaviors you see helps you identify antecedents. As you observe your child, write down everything that happens in as much detail as possible. Try to separate what you actually see and hear from what you think people are feeling. The following is a record of a child's behavior before school.

* * * * *

Tuesday, 8:10-8:20

I woke up John at 8:10. He got right up and started dressing. His room was picked up from last night and his shirt and pants were hanging on the door for today. He put them on quickly and then looked for socks in his drawer. He pulled out two pairs that were rolled up, looked at the tops, and put one pair back in the drawer. After he put them on, and put on and tied his shoes, he went into the bathroom. He looked at the shelf, yelled at me that his hairbrush wasn't there, and then came in screaming at Carl that he'd better not touch his things again or he'd hit him. Carl yelled back that he didn't take his brush. I told John that I'd help him look for it.

* * * * *

In this example, John's mother, Ms. Wells, noted the observation time, and then began to write everything that happened. She described what he did, as well as the events that occurred before and after his actions.

By making this into an "ABC Chart" (listing antecedents, behaviors, and consequences), the picture of John's behavior becomes a little clearer. Looking at the following chart, it appears that John did well when the environment was organized but became easily frustrated and aggressive when things were not as he expected.

* * * * *

Antecedents	*Behaviors*	*Consequences*
Clothes laid out	*John got dressed*	*None*
Hairbrush missing	*John yelled at Carl*	*Carl yelled back; Ms. Wells found brush*

* * * * *

This kind of recording and charting is particularly useful when you are trying to figure out what things influence your child's behavior. Before you begin a program to change his behavior, or when you don't feel your current strategies are working,

an ABC Chart might help you identify the factors that are working for or against you. Then you can try to remove antecedents that signal misbehavior and instead provide antecedents that signal good social behavior.

* * * * *

At dinner time, Ned comes to the table, but keeps one ear on the television program, gulps down his food, and returns to the television. This prevents him from taking part in the family's conversation and also results in Ned being hungry again in a couple of hours.

Antecedents	*Behaviors*	*Consequences*
Television on	*Ned gulps food*	*No conversation; Ned's hungry later*

The television may be an antecedent to Ned's behavior. Keeping the television off at mealtime is an example of removing antecedents that work to signal inappropriate behavior. Setting an attractive table with music in the background is an example of providing antecedents for desired behaviors.

Antecedents	*Behaviors*	*Consequences*
Table set with table-cloth and flowers; Music playing	*Ned eats and talks*	*Family members talk; Ned has a healthy dinner*

* * * * *

You may notice that your child behaves nicely in one place and turns into a real "terror" in another. This may have a lot to do with the setting. The setting or location in which a behavior occurs or events that occur in those settings are examples of ongoing or long-term antecedents. Many times you can make physical changes in your child's surroundings to improve his behaviors. Activity 1.2 provides you with practice for identifying antecedents, behaviors, and consequences of your child's behavior.

ACTIVITY 1.2

Choose a social behavior of your child's. First, make an observational record of this behavior. Second, list the As (Antecedents), Bs (Behaviors), and Cs (Consequences) that you observed.

Date _____ Time _____

Observational Record:

Antecedents	Behaviors	Consequences

CHANGING THE SETTING

Sometimes you can help your child by rearranging the furniture or organizing other things in the room. For instance, if your child is easily distracted, in certain circumstances you can move his chair or the table, or close the curtains to reduce the distraction. In other situations, you can organize the environment to make certain kinds of behaviors easier to perform or more likely to occur.

* * * * *

Alex is very distractible and has a hard time doing homework with so much going on in the house. Alex's father set up a card table in one corner of the kitchen, away from the television and his little brother's play area. Alex sits facing the wall while he does his homework.

* * * * *

To help Bruce make friends, his Boy Scout leader set up two TV trays per work station. Two boys work at one station which creates an environment more conducive to making friends.

* * * * *

Another way to change the surroundings is to add equipment that will make it easier for your child to behave the way you would like. For instance, you could put a mirror on the door for your child to check his appearance before he leaves the house. The booklet "How to Organize Your Child and Save Your Sanity" has many good suggestions for organizing your child.

* * * * *

David's room was always a mess. His clothes were always lying on the floor and piled high on the chair. The dresser was cluttered with all kinds of things. He could never find what he wanted and never had clean clothes. He and his dad installed another clothes rod in the closet, bought an inexpensive clothes tree for the corner, and bought small dividers for his dresser drawer. After a week, David's room is neater.

* * * * *

You might also remove certain items to make the setting more helpful to your child. Are there any objects or equipment that cause problems for him? Can they be eliminated or replaced?

* * * * *

Daryl has so many model airplanes that he wanders from plane to plane and can't settle on any one to play with. His mother decided to put all but five planes into boxes in the closet. Daryl is less distracted since his room is less cluttered. When he chooses one plane, he plays with it longer now.

* * * * *

Activity 1.3 is intended to help you organize your child's bedroom.

ACTIVITY 1.3

Go look at your child's bedroom. List the items that are on the floor. Where does each item belong? Can you tell why your child didn't put it away? Note any problems he might have had. For instance, check to see if there is enough room to put the item away where it belongs. Indicate what you could do to make it easier for your child to put this item away each time.

Item on Floor	Belongs Where	Plan

Often, temporary changes can help your child behave a certain way. Suppose your child has trouble playing with children. When your child is to have a friend over, put away anything that may lead to destructive or uncooperative play. Instead, put several toys or games around that might help trigger cooperative play, like a jump rope, a bat and ball, or Monopoly. Set up the environment to stimulate the children to interact in a positive way.

SCHEDULING ACTIVITIES

Another way of changing your child's surroundings to control behavior is to schedule his activities so that the environment signals his best behavior. Examples include going grocery shopping when the store is not crowded, choosing clothes for the next day before going to bed, and getting up early to allow plenty of time for getting ready for school.

* * * * *

The Farmer's three children go to bed at 9:30 p.m. Mr. Farmer devised a system to end the fighting and bickering that usually went on with all three trying to use the bathroom at the same time. The hour from 8:30 to 9:30 p.m. was divided so that each child would have twenty minutes to put on his pajamas and brush his teeth. They are ready for bed at 9:30.

* * * * *

Ms. Brown found that it reduced her son's anxiety to take him to his karate class five minutes early. This cut out the confusion of being thrown into the middle of the warm-up exercises that were already underway, and not understanding how to become part of the group.

* * * * *

Ms. Lawrence was concerned about her son, Sammy, finishing his homework. When Sammy arrived from school, his mother was watching their favorite rerun of "Leave It to Beaver" on television. Ms. Lawrence decided to leave the television off and to be reading when Sammy got home. After Ms. Lawrence changed her behavior, Sammy would also begin reading and complete his homework assignment before dinner.

* * * * * *

Activity 1.4 is useful in rearranging your child's schedule so that the environment signals his best behavior.

ACTIVITY 1.4

Name one behavior that is a problem for your child.

_____

What antecedents seem to signal the negative behavior?

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

What antecedents would signal more appropriate behavior?

_____ _____

_____ _____

When are the antecedents that signal positive behavior present in the environment?

_____ _____

_____ _____

How can you rearrange your child's schedule to take advantage of these antecedents for positive behavior?

_____

_____

USING REMINDERS

Within a setting, there are a variety of short-term events that can affect our behavior. For instance, when we hear the start of our favorite television show we will come running. Likewise, we write messages to ourselves to remember to do certain tasks, or set an alarm clock to wake up in the morning. In much the same way, you can give children "reminders" for their behaviors.

* * * * *

When Artero sits down to breakfast he sets a kitchen timer for 15 minutes to remind him to stay on schedule.

* * * * *

Ms. Blum posts signs at critical areas for her children, such as a picture of a toothbrush on the bathroom mirror.

* * * * *

Ms. Davis is a very creative mother. She put a rubber duck under the doormat to remind her children to wipe their feet when they heard the "quack" as they walked into the room.

* * * * *

For a series of directions that are always the same, such as "getting ready" or "what to put in the school bag" routines, you and your child can make a reminder chart. This will help your child remember all the necessary steps. Then he can check off the steps completed.

* * * * *

To avoid the morning rush, Sheldon made a chart with all the things that he needed to take to school. It had pictures of books, pencils, a lunch box, homework, etc. Each morning he checked off each item, and five days with all the items remembered meant an extra television show on Friday night.

* * * * *

Erin has a picture chart with the items that he needs for swimming class: suit, goggles, towel, and pool card. Erin checks off each item so that he has everything together before he leaves for the pool.

* * * * *

Activity 1.5 includes a form for developing a reminder chart.

ACTIVITY 1.5

Together with your child, make a reminder chart to help him get ready for school or for bed, or to help him remember what he needs to do for that important first date.

Getting ready to:_____

Things to do: _____ _____ _____

_____ _____ _____

_____ _____ _____

_____ _____ _____

_____ _____ _____

SUMMARY

Antecedents are conditions or events which occur **before** a child's behavior which may actually trigger or set the stage for the child to act a certain way. In this chapter, we discussed identifying these antecedents, removing the ones that initiate unwanted behavior, and adding antecedents for desired behaviors. Ways to signal desired behavior include restructuring the setting by rearranging, organizing, adding, or eliminating elements; rearranging schedules; and posting reminders for the child to see or hear. Changing certain things in a child's environment can go a long way toward making him more successful and socially appropriate.

Chapter 2 provides strategies that you can use to help your child follow directions more readily. It includes a lot of suggestions such as how to make directions more meaningful or giving fewer directions.

CHAPTER 2

HELPING YOUR CHILD FOLLOW DIRECTIONS

Topics in this chapter include:

* Analyzing the Task
* Attending to Directions
* Making Directions Concrete and Precise
* Checking Understanding
* Giving Few Directions at One Time
* Establishing Routines
* Anticipating Changes
* Modeling, Rehearsing, Receiving Feedback, and Practicing Social Behaviors
* Prompting for Certain Behaviors
* Making Directions Meaningful
* Giving Choices

The ability to follow directions is a critical skill in our modern world. Much of a child's school and job success depends on her ability to listen and follow directions. In fact, this skill can have a great impact on her ability to get along with others. This is, sadly, a skill that does not come easily to many children with learning disabilities.

There are many factors involved in following directions. One factor involves understanding and remembering the directions. This is greatly affected by the complexity of the instructions. A second factor has to do with having the physical capability to carry out the directions. This has a lot to do with the child's ability to organize his actions in order to complete the directions. A third factor deals with wanting to carry out the actions. Knowing which of these aspects is interfering with the child's performance is sometimes difficult; a lack of ability or understanding may be mistaken for a lack of willingness. The purpose of this chapter is to help you build your child's skill in following directions.

ANALYZING THE TASK

Most of what we do is made up of many complex behaviors. Through time we have learned to perform them almost automatically, and we take it for granted that our children also approach certain behaviors this way. For instance, when we brush our teeth, we have learned to get the toothpaste from the cabinet, take off the cap, put toothpaste on the toothbrush, brush our teeth, rinse off the toothbrush, put it away, put the cap on the tube of toothpaste, and put it away. A very simple thing like

brushing one's teeth is really made up of many behaviors. Yet each one of these behaviors must be learned and practiced enough to become habit.

This is also true of social behaviors. For instance, in order to start a conversation we need to know how to greet the other person, anticipate what to say that will interest the other person, wait for the other's response, listen to the response, respond with a related statement, and make a closing statement when the conversation comes to an end. Having even a simple conversation means engaging in several behaviors.

As our children's teachers, we have to stop and analyze which behaviors make up the overall behavior we want to teach our child. Usually the child can and will do part of the task. If you examine the steps involved in the task, it will help you make a plan for teaching her the parts she does not know. For example, the following jobs might be broken down like this:

Cleaning a room:

1. Put clothes and shoes in closet.
2. Put books and things on shelves or in dresser drawers.
3. Put dirty clothes in the hamper.
4. Make the bed.
5. Dust the furniture.
6. Vacuum the carpet.

Getting ready for bed:

1. Put on your pajamas.
2. Wash your face.
3. Brush your teeth.
4. Use the toilet.

Answering the telephone:

1. Pick up the telephone.
2. Say "Hello."
3. Ask "Who's calling please?"
4. Say "Just a minute, I'll get her."
5. Hand the phone to the person.
6. If the person isn't home, ask "May I take a message?"
7. Write down the message including who called and her phone number.
8. Say "Thank you. Goodbye."

Now, you can better analyze whether your child will have trouble with any part or parts of what you want her to do. You can help her with this part or make some other arrangements. Activity 2.1 helps you determine what your child can and cannot do. This activity also has you list ways to rearrange her environment so that she can complete the task more readily.

ACTIVITY 2.1

Write down what YOU mean when you tell your child to do the following things. Then, see if your husband/wife agrees with your answers.

Clean her bedroom:

1._____ 3._____

2._____ 4._____

Get ready for bed:

1._____ 3._____

2._____ 4._____

Answer the telephone:

1._____ 3._____

2._____ 4._____

Observe your child doing these things. Circle the parts of the jobs she is successful with and underline those with which she has trouble. For those tasks she has trouble completing, list ways that you can change her environment so that it will be easier.

_____

_____

ATTENDING TO DIRECTIONS

In order for your child to hear and follow a direction, she must be paying attention to you when you give the direction. Check and see if there are other things going on, such as the television being on, before you give a direction. Your child may be better able to focus her attention if she is asked to look at you. You may need to touch her arm to gain her attention.

Do not give directions while you are doing something else, such as reading the paper. Give your child all of your attention, and make sure that you have all of her attention when directions are given.

* * * * *

When it's time for bed, you might turn off the television, make eye contact, and say, "It's time to brush your teeth. I want you to go upstairs and brush your teeth now."

* * * * *

When it's time to leave Jenny's friend's house, Jenny's mom touches her arm. Then she says, "Look at me. We must go now. Find your things and put them in your pack." She is careful to praise her for following directions and says, "Wow! You got ready really fast!"

* * * * *

MAKING DIRECTIONS CONCRETE AND PRECISE

Sometimes, directions become problems because of the way they are given. A common problem is that instructions are too vague for children to follow. Your child's understanding of what she should do may be quite different from that of yours. Also, these commands may mean different things at different times. It will help your child if you describe exactly what behaviors are expected. This will be easy if you have already analyzed the task, as suggested in Activity 2.1.

* * * * *

As they entered the library, Ms. Hanson said, "In the library there is no running. You need to pick a book and sit at the table to read it." These directions gave her child a much clearer understanding of what to do than saying, "We're going to the library and I want you to be good."

* * * * *

Nan's mother explained, "I want you to get ready for the school bus. Get your books, your lunch, and your coat." She rewarded Nan for the directions she had followed and provided reminders for those she hadn't followed.

* * * * *

Some examples of nonspecific and concrete directions are:

Nonspecific	Concrete
"Be polite to Ms. Johnson."	"Answer Ms. Johnson when she talks to you."
"It's time for bed."	"Please turn off the television. You need to put on your pajamas now."
"Please clear the table."	"Please put your plate and silverware on the counter."

Completing Activity 2.2 is a good way to begin giving concrete directions.

ACTIVITY 2.2

Rewrite these directions to make them more concrete and precise. Use them when you make a request.

A. "Go outside and play."

_____

B. "Go to the store for me."

_____

C. "Pick up your clothes."

_____

D. "Be good for the babysitter."

_____

Forehand and McMahon (1981) have pointed out two other potential problems. First, it's common for us to state directions in a polite form used with other adults. For example, you might say, "Could you..."; "Would you like to..."; or "Do you want to..." This can be a problem when you are not really asking if the child "wants" to do something, but are instead giving a command. The child may answer a "Do you

want to..." command with "No." The child has been asked a question, given an implied choice, and answered the question. You are then in the position either of accepting this answer or restating the command. Instead, be sure to state commands as commands and to use the question command when you are actually offering a choice.

Secondly, adults often give children commands by describing the task as if it were going to be a cooperative activity. For example, if you say, "Let's clean out the garage," the message implies that the child will have help. Your child may wait for you to begin the activity or do the task. The solution, as with question commands, is to use this form of request only when help really is intended.

CHECKING UNDERSTANDING

You can check to see if your child understood the directions by having her repeat them. If she forgets or gets distracted in the middle of a series of directions, use questions to have her think for herself about what she is to be doing.

* * * * *

When it is time to get ready for bed you might say, "It's bedtime. You need to get your pajamas on, brush your teeth, and pick a book. That's three things. Can you remember them all? You tell me now, you are to..." Have your child repeat the directions. If she cannot remember all three parts, prompt her, saying, "and brush..." Pause for her to add "my teeth." Reinforce her by saying, "Great! You remembered all three! Now, let's see if you can do them!"

* * * * *

Ms. Erickson said, "You need to pick up your bedroom. I want you to pick up the dirty clothes, the records, and the books. What are you supposed to do?" Mary repeated the directions. After picking up the dirty clothes, she started to call a friend. Ms. Erickson noticed and asked, "What are you supposed to do?" Mary said she didn't know. "You were supposed to pick up what?" added Ms. Erickson. Mary remembered dirty clothes. "Yes! And you did a good job with the dirty clothes. Now what else are you supposed to pick up?" (records) "And what else?" she said, pointing to the book. (books) "Yes! Dirty clothes, records, and books. Then, you can call Alexa."

* * * * *

GIVING FEW DIRECTIONS AT ONE TIME

Some children have a hard time remembering several commands at once. There is too much material presented at one time and they simply forget what was asked of

them. The number of steps remembered is also affected by familiarity with the steps of the task. If a child follows the same routine daily, it will be easier for her to follow that routine than an unfamiliar routine. A general rule of thumb is, the newer the activity, the fewer and simpler the directions need to be. If you find your child having difficulty, back up and give fewer steps. Reward your child for these intermediate steps, then give one or two more. It is better to break a task into three parts and have your child experience success than to give all the parts at once and have her become frustrated.

* * * * *

At mealtime, Ms. Mahoney gave her daughter, Sarah, directions for setting the table. She had started with one step, "Put the butter on the table." As Sarah became more skilled, she added, "Put the plates and napkins on the table." Ms. Mahoney ended by saying, "The knives go to the right of the plate."

* * * * *

Because it's hard to leave what you are doing every few minutes to go check on your child's progress, tell her to do one thing and then come show you. This gives your child the responsibility of checking with you for the next step.

* * * * *

It was time for Lori to get ready for school. Her father said, "Get dressed and put on your shoes and socks. Come show me when you're finished." When this was completed, he said, "Good! Now eat breakfast and then brush your teeth. Come tell me when you are finished brushing your teeth." When this was completed, he said, "You're almost ready! Get your lunch and backpack."

* * * * *

Always recognize the directions that were followed. If your child follows two of three directions, do not ignore the two correct and say, "You forgot to...." Praise the correct ones first. You can gently remind or question her about the one forgotten. Place the emphasis on her successes, not failures.

ESTABLISHING ROUTINES

Routines make children comfortable. They know what to expect, and they have an idea about what to do next. They may feel less of a need to balk or to stop and wait for you to tell them what to do. Doing the same things in the same order each time will help children become more successful and independent.

* * * * *

The Ericksons have their children do these activities in the same order each night:

1. *Take a bath.*
2. *Brush their teeth.*
3. *Pick and read a book.*
4. *Get a drink of water.*
5. *Go to bed.*

They believe that it has cut down on the amount of time they spend arguing with their children about what they should be doing.

* * * * *

ANTICIPATING CHANGES

All of us tend to feel more comfortable if we know in advance what is expected of us. When you are going somewhere, you can help prepare your child to act the way you expect by telling her where you are going and stating clearly the specific behaviors expected in this environment.

* * * * *

In the car going to the library say, "We are going to the library. In the library you must walk quietly and talk only in a whisper so other people can read." Before going through the door to the library, ask your child, "What two things do you need to remember to do in the library?" "That's right! Remember to walk quietly and whisper."

* * * * *

Many children also need time to prepare themselves for a change from one activity to another. They can begin to prepare for the transition if you give them notice that it will soon be time to change.

* * * * *

Set a kitchen timer and tell your child, "I'm going to set the timer for five minutes. When the timer rings, you will need to stop playing and put away your things."

* * * * *

Prepare your child if a routine is going to change. Practice the new directions. Some prior knowledge and practice will make your child more familiar with what is coming, and the directions will be more meaningful at the time they are needed.

* * * * *

Linda's mother explained, "Tomorrow you will be picked up at school by your father. You are going to spend the weekend with him. We'll need to get up earlier than usual so we can pack your bag."

* * * * *

MODELING, REHEARSING, RECEIVING FEEDBACK, AND PRACTICING SOCIAL BEHAVIORS

Effective teaching usually involves a sequence of modeling, rehearsing, giving feedback, and promoting practice. If you are going to give your child new information or teach her a new skill, you might want to demonstrate how to do it, "rehearse" it with her, tell her how she did, and have her practice the skill.

* * * * *

Ann wanted to join a basketball team. Her brother helped her learn new sports terms. Then she learned and practiced the basics of dribbling and shooting. Ann felt more confident and could better understand the coaches' instructions on the first day.

* * * * *

Social behaviors are rehearsed and practiced in the same way other skills or behaviors are learned. In teaching your child to dribble a basketball, for example, it is first necessary to show her how to dribble. (model) Then, you have her try it. (rehearse) Then you give her feedback on how well she did. Next, the child will need to practice this newly learned behavior. For example, say, "Here, watch me dribble the ball." (model) "Now you try it." (rehearse) "Good job. Remember to keep your eyes straight ahead." (feedback) "Now you practice dribbling." (practice) The four steps of model, rehearse, give feedback, and practice are an effective way of teaching new skills and behaviors.

* * * * *

Jenny wants to ask if she can join in a game with the neighborhood kids, but she is a little shy. Her mother helps Jenny by saying and doing the following:

(Model) *"Jenny, watch how I ask you to play." "Hi." (Wait for response.) "I'd really like to play basketball with you. Is that okay?"*

(Rehearsal) *"Jenny, now you try it." (Her mother plays with the basketball and Jenny says, "Hi.") "Hi, Jenny." (Jenny asks, "Can I play basketball with you?") "Sure, come on!"*

(Feedback) *"Good, Jenny. You asked in a nice way. It might help to say it in a more cheerful way, too, so they think you really want to play. Let's try it again." (Jenny tries again.) "Now, that's more like it."*

(Practice) *"Are you ready to give that a try now?"*

* * * * *

These four steps can be used to teach other social behaviors, such as handling stressful situations like losing at a game, dealing with being teased, or making new friends.

* * * * *

Sue hates to lose at anything and usually walks away sulking when this happens. Sue's father, Mr. Jensen, helps her with this.

(Model) *"Sue, I know it's hard for you not to win all of the time. I want you to watch what I do when I lose." (Her father sets up the table game and pretends that Sue has won the game.) "Sue, congratulations for winning! That was a fun game!"*

(Rehearsal) *"Sue, now you try it." Sue says, "Good game." Mr. Jensen responds, "Thanks, Sue. Do you want to play again?"*

(Feedback) *"Sue, what you said was terrific. It made me want to play another game with you."*

(Practice) *"Sue, we'll play a game together tonight. I want you to say that if you don't win, okay?"*

* * * * *

PROMPTING FOR CERTAIN BEHAVIORS

You can teach your child certain behaviors by using various kinds of prompts or cues. **Gestural** prompts or cues are simply movements made without touching or speaking. For instance, you can point to an object that should be picked up, or imitate someone drinking from a glass to give a cue to your child to drink her juice. **Physical** prompts or cues are those that you use to physically guide your child to perform the desired behavior. For instance, if you were teaching her to swim, you might hold her arms in the correct position to practice the strokes. **Verbal** cues are commands or requests. You use these when you remind your child to say, "Thank you."

Of course, the goal is for your child to perform the desired behavior with as little prompting as possible. However, at first it may be best to prompt whenever your child needs to perform the behavior you are teaching. Give the prompt before she has a chance to make a mistake. Then gradually, you can phase out the prompt until she can perform the desired behavior without a prompt. You gradually eliminate the prompt by making it briefer, softer, or less obvious.

* * * * *

Denise's mother uses gestural prompts to help her learn when it's her turn to talk. She tends to interrupt others, so they agreed that her mother would signal her with a nod when it was a good time for her to talk.

* * * * *

Ms. Smith began verbally prompting her child to wash before dinner by saying, "Time for dinner. Zoe, I want you to go to the bathroom and wash your hands." Then she began to fade out the prompt by gradually using briefer and briefer prompts--"Time for dinner. Zoe, go wash your hands." and then, "Dinner!"--with several intermediate steps.

* * * * *

MAKING DIRECTIONS MEANINGFUL

Your child may be more willing to follow directions if the directions are relevant and have meaning for her. You can assist her to follow the logic of an action. For instance, a child is more likely to pick up papers she is saving or has worked hard on, than papers that she doesn't care about.

Forehand and McMahon (1981) caution us, however, not to "bury" our directions in so much talk that the real message gets lost. When there is a problem with compliance, reasons should be kept to a minimum and they should **precede** the command.

* * * * *

Rather than telling a child, "Please clean up your room. We are having company tonight, and you want Kathy to be able to see your new outfit, don't you?" you could say, "We are having company tonight. So that Kathy can see your new outfit, I want you to clean your room."

* * * * *

Betty needs to do her chores. Her father might say, "I know you are saving your allowance money for new shoes. You have to finish your household job in order to get your allowance. Take out the trash and empty the cat litter." Linking the chores to what Betty wants to buy makes the directions meaningful and important for her to complete the tasks.

* * * * *

Toni's mom explained, "If you want to have time to watch the Cosby show, you need to take a bath now."

* * * * *

Ms. O'Hare told her children, "I'm having a friend visit and I want the house neat. Please clean up your mess."

* * * * *

GIVING CHOICES

Children are more motivated to complete tasks and follow directions if they feel they have some say in the matter. When it is possible, let your child choose which household jobs she wants to do. Give only the options that are acceptable to you. Then, your child gets to make a choice and you are happy with either choice. You can also give choices about time schedules. Again, both schedules should be acceptable to you.

* * * * *

Sarah had to help clean the living room. Her choices were picking up or vacuuming and dusting.

* * * * *

* * * * *

Lana and her mother went shopping. Mother said, "You must stay in the girl's department or where the books are. You may choose. Where will you be?"

* * * * *

Activity 2.3 helps you determine whether or not you give your child choices.

ACTIVITY 2.3

Name two choices that you have given your child this week.

1._____

2._____

Name one more choice that you will give your child today.

1._____

SUMMARY

This chapter dealt with helping your child learn to follow directions. The way that we present instructions can greatly enhance or delay our child's skill development. The first consideration in giving your child directions is knowing exactly what you want her to do, and then stating it precisely and concretely. Other factors discussed include having your child's attention when you give the directions, having her repeat the directions, giving her only a few steps at a time, using consistent routines, rehearsing new or unfamiliar directions, using prompts, making directions meaningful, and giving choices. The importance of giving more attention to directions that your child remembers and follows--those that are meaningful to her--and praising the steps your child does follow were also examined in this chapter.

Chapter 3 addresses problem solving and contains activities to practice problem solving with your child.

CHAPTER 3

TEACHING PROBLEM SOLVING

Topics in this chapter include:

* Teaching Through Modeling
* Using Problem Solving Steps
* Choosing the "Right" Time

When children are very young, they are totally dependent on us to identify and solve their problems. If a baby cries, you must check to see if he is hungry, hot, cold, wet, or bored. Then, you correct the problem. As your child grows, even though you still recognize and "feel" many of his problems, he takes over more and more responsibility for solving his own problems. His successes generally result in increased self assurance, responsibility, and realistic problem solving.

As parents, we have to learn how to help our children to be more independent in their problem solving. Otherwise, our children learn to depend on us for answers and become helpless when we are not around. By teaching them steps for effective problem solving, modeling this behavior, and teaching them to think through the process and reward themselves, children can become independent problem solvers.

TEACHING THROUGH MODELING

Modeling problem solving involves letting our children know that we have problems, but that we have ways of approaching these problems. Modeling may not be a conscious process, yet we are always models to our children. Making a conscious effort to teach through modeling is possible, if our words and actions are genuine and consistent over time.

As we think through our problems and possible solutions, we talk to ourselves--though perhaps not out loud. We think about the consequences of our actions and decide on the best solution. Because this is done internally, children do not know the process we use. It would be beneficial for them to have this process modeled. As you approach a problem, think out loud. Children learn not only the outcome of the problem, but also the process we use to resolve it.

* * * * *

"I'm very mad at Gregg. I'm so mad I want to tell him I won't take him to the mall. But, if I do that he won't get the hair cut he really needs. I'll end up having to take him tomorrow night. That's not going to work. I need to take him today. I'll just tell him how mad I am."

* * * * *

CHOOSING THE "RIGHT" TIME

When your child has a problem that involves intense feelings, it is important to realize that problem solving will involve the expression of feelings, possible embarrassment, the sharing of secrets, and that it will take clear thinking and a significant segment of uninterrupted time. Therefore, time and privacy are important. Problems should not be discussed in public nor with siblings or friends around. Enough time should be allowed to discuss the problem so that your child feels a beginning to a resolution has been achieved. Activity 3.1 assists you in pinpointing a time that would be best to discuss a problem and solutions to the problem with your child.

ACTIVITY 3.1

When do you have the best talks with your child?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Is this a time you could talk about new problem solving techniques? _____

When first teaching problem solving, it is also useful to focus upon a problem that does not involve a conflict between you and your child, but one that you are less involved in, such as a problem with school or friends. Activity 3.2 has you select two problems that you can use as examples when talking about problem solving with your child.

ACTIVITY 3.2

Select two problems your child has with school and friends.

1._____

2._____

USING PROBLEM SOLVING STEPS

Different models for problem solving and conflict resolution generally involve a sequence of steps which begins with identifying the problem, generating solutions, finding the best solution, and setting up an action plan, followed by evaluating the outcomes.

Step 1. Defining the problem.

Sometimes problems are hard to recognize and may not really be what they seem. Frequently, children have general ill-defined feelings about a situation and have trouble verbalizing the problem. You can help your child define the real problem, including the specifics. It might help to have him write down the problem. Teach him to ask and answer the following questions:

1. Who is the problem about?
2. Where does the problem happen?
3. What events lead to the problem?
4. When and how does it happen?
5. How does he behave when it happens?

* * * * *

Nine-year-old Troy comes into his house, slams down his backpack and stomps noisily up to his room, slamming the door. His parents have no idea what the problem is. When his mother asks, Troy says, "Billy said he won't play with me." As they talk more, she learns that for the past two weeks the children next door have been teasing Troy, and he has no one else to play with. Troy's problem: Having no one to play with.

* * * * *

Step 2. Generating solutions.

People generally call this brainstorming. Brainstorming involves coming up with as many ideas as possible without evaluating their worth. There are no wrong answers at this point, so your child is encouraged to use his imagination to come up with new possible actions. When brainstorming, it is important to write down ideas.

* * * * *

Troy identified six solutions to his problem of not having anyone to play with, including:

1. *Make a new friend;*
2. *Ask a classmate to come over;*
3. *Move back to his previous neighborhood; or*
4. *Make the kids next door stop teasing.*

* * * * *

Step 3. Finding the best solution.

Have your child go through his list of possible solutions and list the pros (good things) and cons (bad things) of each. Talk with him about the possible consequences of using each solution. Using Troy as an example, we go through Steps 1, 2, and 3.

* * * * *

Troy listed the pros and cons of each possible solution to the problem of having no one to play with.

Solutions	*Pros*	*Cons*
Make new friends.	*It's fun to meet new people. Maybe I'd meet someone I like better than Billy.*	*It would take time. No other kids live on the block.*
Ask a classmate over.	*It would be fun to show him my room. Billy would see I had a friend.*	*Someone would have to drive us. Maybe he couldn't come over.*
Move back to my old neighborhood.	*I'd get to play with old friends.*	*It would be far from the swimming pool. Mom would be sad. I would have to go to my old school.*
Make Billy stop teasing me.	*I could play with Billy all the time. I would like it if he would stop teasing me. He has a swimming pool.*	*They might not stop. They might tease me more. I don't like them.*

In the end, Troy chose to ask a classmate over to play.

* * * * *

Have your child choose the best solution. Help him decide how the best solution can be judged. Is he looking for the cheapest answer, the one that will be easiest for him right now, the one that will make everyone else the happiest, etc.? Using this criteria, have him pick the best solution.

Step 4. Setting up an action plan.

Setting up an action plan involves focusing upon a solution that is reasonable and has a good chance of being successful. Through questions, suggestions, and clarification, you can assist your child in developing a successful action plan and seeing problems which could produce unnecessary failure. The specific plan of action answers questions like:

What is he going to do to solve the problem?
When will he do it? How often?
How will he do it?
Who will be involved?
Does he have everything he needs to carry out the plan?
Are there any situations where this plan will not work?

* * * * *

Troy decided to ask Paul over. Even though they weren't real good friends, Paul liked to play soccer, too. Troy's father agreed to drive him to pick up Paul on Tuesday. Troy agreed to phone Paul, to see if he would come over.

* * * * *

You can offer encouragement and help your child predict the barriers to carrying out the action plan. Pointing out the reality of the situation and talking through the possible outcomes can help reduce failure. Rehearsal through role playing can be a helpful tool to use also.

* * * * *

When it was time for Troy to phone Paul, Troy said that he didn't know what to say to Paul. Ms. Close helped her son rehearse.

Troy: *What if he won't come?*
Ms. Close: *What could you do, then?*
Troy: *I guess I could call Johnny.*
Ms. Close: *That seems like a good backup plan.*
Troy: *But, what should I say to Paul to make him want to come?*
Ms. Close: *Well, let's try it. You be Paul, and I'll be you, okay? (Ms. Close picks up the phone and pretends to dial Paul's number.) Hello, Paul? This is Troy.*
Troy: *Hi, Troy.*
Ms. Close: *Say, I know you like to play soccer and I was wondering if you would be able to come to my house on Tuesday to practice soccer? My father said he'd pick you up and drive you over here. Do you think you could say that, Troy?*
Troy: *Okay, let me try it. (Troy pretends to dial Paul's number.) Hi, Paul? This is Troy. Could you come to my house on Tuesday to practice soccer? My dad will drive you over here.*
Ms. Close: *Sure, that sounds like fun. Let me ask my mom. Good job, Troy. Now, what would you say if Paul can't come over?*
Troy: *I guess I'll just hang up.*

Ms. Close: *Why don't you ask if another day--say Thursday--would work out. If that won't work maybe you could ask him to call you when he could come.*

Troy: *Okay, I'll try it!*

With this type of rehearsal, Troy was able to phone Paul. Troy felt more confident because he had practiced what he would say to Paul, and what he would say if Paul could not come over. If Paul could not play with Troy, then Troy would need to try his other plan of asking another friend to play.

* * * * *

STEP 5. CARRYING OUT THE ACTION PLAN AND EVALUATING THE OUTCOME.

If your child has set a realistic goal for an action plan, it will significantly increase the chances that the plan will be successful. You can help by giving prompts, if necessary. Chapter 2 discusses "giving prompts" in more detail.

It's important that your child learns from his successes and his mistakes. Have him evaluate whether his plan was successful, and what contributed to the success or failure of the plan. What would he do differently next time? Our example of Derek helps illustrate this point.

* * * * *

Derek's parents have been teaching him these five problem solving steps over the past month. This is how he solved a problem with his brother.

Step 1. Define the problem.

Derek's mother, Ms. Sell, heard him screaming and yelling in the other room. Then she heard his brother, Alex, cry. Ms. Sell asked, "What's going on in here?" Alex claimed that Derek had hit him, while Derek angrily replied that Alex wouldn't leave his rock collection alone. Derek stated that this was the third time that Alex had taken his rocks.

Step 2. Generate solutions.

Derek came up with the following possible solutions:

1. *Continue to hit his brother.*
2. *Throw a rock at him.*
3. *Play with his rocks only when Alex is not around.*
4. *Play with his rocks in his room.*
5. *Ask Alex nicely to leave his collection alone.*
6. *Help Alex start his own rock collection.*

Step 3. Find the best solution.

Solutions	*Pros*	*Cons*
Continue to hit him.	*He'll stop for now.*	*I'll have to stay in my room for punishment.*
Throw a rock at him.	*He'll stop for now.*	*It would hurt Alex. Mom will take away my collection. I would have to stay in my room as punishment.*
Play only when Alex isn't around.	*He wouldn't play with my rocks.*	*It isn't fair. I have to wait. He might get them when I'm not around.*
Play in my room.	*He wouldn't be around.*	*He'd bang on my door. I want to watch television too.*
Explain to Alex.	*I would be nice. He might stop.*	*None*
Help Alex make collection.	*It would be fun. We could play together.*	*It would take time to help him.*

Derek decided to help Alex start his own rock collection.

Step 4. Set up an action plan.

Derek decided to ask his mom for a shoe box for Alex and to take Alex to the park to look for rocks on Saturday. Until then, Derek decided he would give Alex three of his least favorite rocks to start his collection.

Step 5. Carry out the plan and evaluate the outcome.

Derek was able to carry out his plan. The plan was successful, as Alex no longer bothered his rock collection. If Alex had continued, Derek would have needed to choose an alternative solution from his list.

* * * * *

Activity 3.3 contains a worksheet to help you work through problem solving with your child.

ACTIVITY 3.3

Use this worksheet to help your child deal with a problem. Discuss the situation and follow the problem solving steps.

Step 1: Define the problem:_____

Step 2: Generate solutions.

1._____ 3._____

2._____ 4._____

Step 3: Find the best solution.

	Pros	Cons
1.	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____

Solution to try:_____

Step 4: Set up an action plan.

What?	When?	Who?
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Step 5: Carry out the plan; evaluate the outcome.

How well did it work?_____

_____

What could I have done differently?_____

_____

Should I chose another solution? If so, begin again with Step 3.

SUMMARY

Sometimes, it seems easier for us as parents to decide on the solution to a problem. However, our children will never learn to be independent problem solvers if we don't give them a chance. We can teach them a lot by modeling our own problem solving strategies. This chapter presented five problem solving steps to teach children:

1. Define the problem.
2. Generate solutions.
3. Find the best solution.
4. Set up a plan of action.
5. Carry out the plan and evaluate the outcome.

One of the major reasons that the problem solving steps are so successful is that the children themselves participate and generate solutions acceptable to them. Then, they are much more likely to follow through with the plan and to learn from their actions.

Chapter 4 provides suggestions for how to cope with problems that haven't been solved or won't be solved.

CHAPTER 4

TEACHING COPING MECHANISMS

Topics in this chapter include:

* Controlling Impulses
* Expressing Anger in Other Ways
* Approaching the Task

No matter how much we prepare ahead, sometimes things get stressful. One of the biggest problems for many children with learning disabilities is controlling their impulses when they are upset or frustrated. They may either run from the situation, explode, or give up without fully expressing their points of view. We can prepare children to handle these difficult times by teaching them certain coping mechanisms. First, they must learn how to stop the impulse long enough to think. Then, they can be taught other ways to express their anger and frustration. In addition, we can teach them ways to reduce their frustration. The following strategies are presented to help your child cope when the frustrations that come from interacting with others become too great.

CONTROLLING IMPULSES

Before a child can learn an acceptable way to express anger, she must learn how to stop the impulse to react in the way which has caused conflict in the past. Even though many children may know what they "should" do, their impulses often prevent them from following through. It is necessary, therefore, to first give the child something specific to do when she first feels angry. This, then, will curb the impulse to react in an undesirable way and give her the time needed to think of other alternatives.

Count to Ten

In their book, *Skillstreaming the Elementary School Child*, McGinnis and Goldstein (1984) teach children to stop and count to ten before they react to something that someone says. This gives them enough time to remember to consider all their choices before they react. Discuss this new strategy with your child when she is calm and relaxed, and tell her you will help her try it the next time she gets mad.

When you see her about to get upset and react without thinking, say "Count to ten with me! One, two,...ten." Count out loud with her until she is able to use the strategy by herself.

Walk Away For Now

When a child's explosive nature gets her into trouble, it may be best to teach her to walk away from the situation. McGinnis and Goldstein (1984) teach children about this coping mechanism. Later, this child can be taught other methods of dealing with anger and frustration at the time.

* * * * *

When Joan gets teased, her father taught her to count to ten, turn around, and walk away.

* * * * *

When her mother gets mad at her for something she's done, Sarah usually says something nasty in return. They agreed that although they need to deal with the problem sometime, it would be better for Sarah to say, "I'm getting mad and I want to talk about it later." and leave.

* * * * *

Relaxing

Sometimes we cope better if we make ourselves relax. With a lot of practice, we can train our bodies to relax even when we're upset. Children can be taught relaxing exercises, too, but it takes time and practice. Although there are a number of different relaxation techniques, one of the common methods is to tighten one part of your body (say, your arm), while the other parts stay relaxed. Release the tight part and tighten a different part. Continue this until each part has been tightened and relaxed. In this way, a child learns to identify her own tight muscles and to relax them on command. Read Activity 4.1 and relax!

ACTIVITY 4.1

Try this relaxation technique as you train your child. We parents need to relax sometimes too!

Another relaxation method is called imaging. There are various books and audio recordings to instruct you in this method (see the References section), but the general idea is to picture something relaxing in your mind and concentrate on it. If you practice using this image to relax, you can use this same mental picture to help you relax and cope with difficult situations.

* * * * *

When Sharon gets angry at her parents, she uses imaging to relax. She closes her eyes and thinks about the trip to the beach. She pictures sitting on the beach listening to the waves. Then she pictures herself lying on the lounge chair listening to her walkman. She imagines walking along the water, with the warm sand on her bare feet. She feels good and relaxed. Sharon opens her eyes and takes a moment to bring her thoughts back to the present situation.

* * * * *

Activity 4.2 gives you suggestions for making an imaging tape.

ACTIVITY 4.2

Try making an imaging tape for your child. Think about the kinds of things that would make her happy and relaxed. Discuss these with your child. Then dictate these mental pictures into a tape recorder, concentrating on the little sensations that will help make it real for your child. Use your calmest voice. Have your child listen to the tape daily. Then suggest that she play the tape when she becomes upset.

EXPRESSING ANGER IN OTHER WAYS

When your child gets angry at someone, it's important to teach her to express her anger in acceptable terms. You need to let her be angry, but you do not have to let her express anger in ways that are unacceptable, such as hitting or screaming. Teach your child how she can express anger verbally or by doing something physical.

Verbal Expression

Tell your child that you'll accept verbal disagreement, but not physical aggression. See if you can help her state her anger in a way that does not hurt anyone, but lets the other person know her feelings. Some children prefer to write about their feelings in a journal or in a note to someone.

* * * * *

"When I make you come in earlier than you want, I know you get mad. You can tell me you're mad, but you cannot scream at me. Say, 'When I have to come in early I get mad!'"

* * * * *

Activity 4.3 helps you think of positive ways that anger can be expressed.

ACTIVITY 4.3

Write what your child says the next time she gets angry at someone in the family. Think of a better way that she could have expressed her anger.

What my child said:_____

_____

What she could have said:_____

_____

Physical Expression

Another way for your child to express her anger is to do something physical. You might teach your child to run around the block or ride her bicycle to the store.

* * * * *

"When I make you go to bed earlier than you want I know you get mad. You can hit your pillow when you get mad, but you can't hit me."

* * * * *

"When I tell you that it's too late to go over to Anna's house, you can let out your anger by running very fast outside."

* * * * *

APPROACHING THE TASK

One of the best ways to help your child cope is to help her modify her approach to the task. She can do this by breaking down the job into smaller goals, by taking breaks, and by asking for help when necessary.

Break Down the Task

Divide complicated or difficult tasks into smaller steps. Your child can accomplish smaller steps and will continue until the task is complete. Another possibility is to divide the task into smaller steps and you do the most difficult parts, with your child completing the rest. Chapter 2's content includes analyzing the task. When working with your child on a task, have your child be the one to finish the task. If you start it and she completes the task, you can say, "Wow, you did it!" If she starts and then needs help, you are the one who finishes and succeeds at the task. For example, if your child is learning to sew on a button, you start by threading the needle, and let her finish it. Either way, you make the task manageable for your child.

* * * * *

If everything your child owns is on the floor, and you say, "Clean your room," she is likely to feel overwhelmed. Break down the task, by saying first, "Pick up all the papers." When that is complete, praise that accomplishment. Next say, "Pick up all the books." Again, reward her for doing that part of the job. Then, "Pick up all of the dirty clothes." Continue until the job is finished.

* * * * *

Ms. Matson, Carmen's mother, had used the above technique often and Carmen appeared bored with having to check with her mother after each step. Thus, she decided to have Carmen check her own progress when completing a task. They developed a simple checklist for Carmen to use while she cleaned the garage. Carmen kept the list with her while she worked and checked off each task as she finished the task. Both Carmen and her mother were happier.

* * * * *

Mandy had problems with starting her term paper. She kept thinking it would take too long and she had other short assignments that she had to complete also. Finally, she spoke to her father about her problem. He helped her think of the steps involved in writing the paper and they developed a checklist for her to use. He also suggested that she complete a step a day so she wouldn't get overwhelmed with the task. Mandy completed her paper within two weeks.

* * * * *

Activity 4.4 gives you an opportunity to analyze tasks.

ACTIVITY 4.4

Try to remember the last time you tried to do something which you found very difficult, but at which you were finally successful. What was that?

_____

Write down the steps you took to finally accomplish this task:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

Now describe the last time that you remember your child being frustrated by something at home. What was she trying to do?

_____

_____

How could you break this task down into smaller steps? List them.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

Take breaks

One coping technique children should learn is to take breaks and then come back to the job. You can help your child adopt a slow, steady approach to a task. If she can finish a small portion of a task, take a short break, and then come back to it, she

will be less likely to exceed her tolerance level. The key is to help her stop before she becomes too frustrated to be productive.

* * * * *

If your child gets frustrated with homework, help her to divide the homework into parts. For example, if she has two pages of math problems, and she becomes fidgety or tense after completing only part of a page, suggest that she take a break and eat an apple after she finishes the first page.

* * * * *

Ask for Help

Sometimes tasks are too difficult for a child, or the child is too tired or frustrated to continue. When a child has reached her limit, she needs to be able to ask for help and not throw a tantrum.

If your child does lose her temper, model how she is to get help. Have her repeat the question, "Would you please help me?" Ignore the tantrum. Sooner or later she will learn that the question gets your attention. The tantrum does not. Go through the problem solving sequence of "How do I get help? I ask for it." each time she needs help. After repeated practice, she may be more likely to ask for help. Do Activity 4.5 to find out just how many times your child asks for help.

ACTIVITY 4.5

Observe when your child asks for help. Write down his exact words or actions.

_____

_____

Count how often your child asks for help today. _____

SUMMARY

Changing a child's habit of acting out of anger or frustration begins with teaching her to control impulses. Counting to ten, walking away, and relaxing were presented as successful ways to do this. A child can also learn alternative ways to express her

anger or frustration, such as stating her feelings, keeping a journal, or using a physical release. Breaking down a behavior into small steps so that a child will likely be successful, taking breaks, and teaching her to ask for help were also presented as ways to reduce a child's stress and frustration.

Rewarding a child's best efforts is important. Chapter 5 explains how to reinforce these efforts and how often.

CHAPTER 5

REINFORCING YOUR CHILD'S BEST EFFORTS

Topics in this chapter include:

* Providing Consequences for Good Behavior
* Shaping
* Using Token Reinforcers
* Devising a Token System
* Decreasing Behaviors
* Using Punishment

As all parents know, the way our children behave around others depends on their motivation as well as on their social skills. In the previous chapters, we discussed how to arrange an environment that fosters social behavior and how to teach your child the behavior he needs to learn from, and cope with, the demands that we place on him. In this chapter, we discuss how you can encourage your child to behave his best and to use the skills he has learned. You will learn how the consequences of your child's behavior can be structured to encourage social growth and to discourage behavior that interferes with social development.

PROVIDING CONSEQUENCES FOR GOOD BEHAVIOR

We have all learned that we suffer the consequences of our behaviors. Consequences can be pleasant, or unpleasant, or they may have no effect at all. If the consequence is pleasant, it is more likely that the behavior will occur again. *When a behavior is likely to occur again, the behavior has been reinforced.* A *reinforcer* is any person, thing, or event which, when provided as a consequence of behavior, makes that behavior more likely to happen again.

* * * * *

Tim, who is ten, spent most of the morning making a birthday card for his grandmother. When he gave it to her, his grandmother was so pleased. She gave Tim a big hug, and told him that she would always keep it to remember the day. She showed it off to everyone around, and made Tim very proud of him efforts.

* * * * *

Many of the reinforcers we experience seem to come naturally. When we work hard to succeed, we get feelings of personal satisfaction and self esteem that are reinforcing; when we help a friend, we experience gratitude and a sense of increased intimacy.

But not all of our reinforcers are so subtle. When we work overtime we get paid more, when we compete especially well we get a trophy, and when we realize a personal goal we are likely to reward ourselves. Children need to be reinforced in a very obvious way until they learn the impact of more subtle rewards. In fact, one of the most effective ways we can increase desirable behaviors in our children is to use reinforcers as consequences for the desired behaviors and to avoid reinforcing undesirable behaviors.

If you watch what your child does when he is left on his own, you can often identify his reinforcers. Does your child seek out particular people or choose any particular activities? Once you identify reinforcers, you can decide which ones are most effective for your child and the most comfortable for you. You may decide to use **material objects** (such as a piece of fruit, or a toy, or tokens that can be traded in for something later), **social reinforcers** (such as a hug, a smile, or praise), or **activities** (such as going to the park, playing a game, or baking cookies) to reinforce good social behavior.

* * * * *

When Donald is allowed to roam where he wants in the drug store, he likes to look at model trains. His father bought Donald a "tunnel" for his train set to use as a reinforcer. When Donald gets along especially well with his sister, his father works on the train set with him.

* * * * *

Our goal is to use reinforcers that are natural consequences of the child's behavior. For instance, being praised is a more natural consequence for your child doing what you asked than getting check marks or stars. For most children, attention and praise are the most effective reinforcers. However, when these do not make a change in your child's behavior, it may be necessary to use both material objects and social reinforcers at first and to gradually fade out the material ones. It is also important to use a variety of reinforcers so that your child won't get tired of them.

* * * * *

Praise doesn't seem to have much effect on Daryl's behavior. So when Daryl behaves at the pool, his mom praises him and lets him play in the park for 15 minutes before they go home.

* * * * *

Activity 5.1 gives you an opportunity to examine when and how often you reinforce your child's behavior, as well as the kind of reinforcers that you use.

ACTIVITY 5.1

What kind of a reinforcer are you? Pick a couple of hours to observe yourself.

How many times did you reinforce your child? _____

What types of reinforcers did you give? _____

_____

Whether a consequence acts as a reinforcer depends on the effect it has on the behavior. Sometimes, consequences don't affect behavior in the way we intend. For example, if you give John a smile each time he plays with his sister, and it does not increase the amount of playing together, the smile is not a reinforcer for John. So what may work for one child may not work for another. Also, it may work sometimes, but not always. For instance, an ice cream cone may reinforce behavior after school but not after a big dinner. The only way to tell if a reinforcer is truly reinforcing for your child is to see if it has the desired effect of increasing the positive behavior of your child.

The following rules will help you use reinforcers effectively:

Rule #1. Reinforce immediately after the behavior. This will help your child know immediately what behavior is being reinforced. Don't give the reinforcer before he does the desired behavior. For example, saying, "I'll give you a cookie now, but you have to clean your room later," may result in him not following through. This is often called "Grandma's Rule: First you eat your mashed potatoes, then you can have dessert."

Rule #2. Tell your child specifically what behavior is being reinforced. For example, tell your child, "Here is a cookie for sharing with Martha." Just providing a reinforcer may not be enough. Explaining what the reinforcer is for will help your child understand the relationship between the behavior and the reinforcer.

Rule #3. Reinforce only desirable behavior. This may sound obvious, but sometimes a parent feels that her child will be upset if he doesn't get the reinforcer, so the parent gives it regardless of the child's behavior.

Rule #4. Tell your child what he must do to earn a reinforcer. For example, say, "**When** you give Tony his turn..." or "**After** you give Tony his turn **then** you may have your snack." This is preferable to the "If you..., **then** you may have..." statement because when you say, "If..." you imply that your child can decide not to do something.

Rule #5. Avoid negotiating. Once you have stated what it is you want your child to do, don't let him plead or bargain with you. Likewise, don't beg or nag him after you have stated the request. Otherwise, he can be taught to ask for more by arguing.

Rule #6. Avoid promising reinforcers that you cannot deliver. Some children can be told that they may choose something later. It is important, however, that you first tell them that the reward will come later and then explain what you want them to do.

Rule #7. When your child is first learning the desired behavior, reinforce every response. Later, you can reinforce only once in a while. We'll discuss this rule in more detail in the next section, but being consistent is a good way to help your child learn the desired behavior. Try out the above rules, using Activity 5.2 as a starting point.

ACTIVITY 5.2

Under each of the categories listed below, list as many reinforcers as you can think of for your child. Observe your child to get ideas and ask him what he likes.

Material Objects	Social Reinforcers	Activities
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

SHAPING

What do you do when the behavior you want to increase never occurs or occurs only very rarely? In these cases, you have very few occasions to reinforce the behavior,

and your child might never learn about the conditions under which he will be rewarded. Other less desirable behaviors may occur instead.

* * * * *

Ms. Dahl is teaching her son, Collin, to play with his little brother. She waits until Collin offers to share his toys before she gives any reinforcement. However, Collin doesn't share any of his toys so he doesn't earn a reinforcer during the whole day. Instead, Collin continues to tease his little brother, and he is reinforced by his brother's attention to him.

* * * * *

In cases where a behavior occurs only rarely, you will need to gradually change your criteria for reinforcing your child's behavior. At first, use a lenient criterion, reinforcing him for behaviors that are closest to what you want in the end. Later, require more before giving a reinforcer. As your child comes closer and closer to the end goal, gradually change the criterion. This process is called shaping.

You may state the criterion in terms of: 1) the exact behaviors to be completed (for example, brushing one's teeth), 2) the rate at which the behavior should be performed (getting dressed within 10 minutes), 3) the accuracy of the behavior (correctly spelling the caller's name when taking a telephone message), or 4) the duration of the behavior (sitting in one's chair for the whole meal).

To increase the **duration** of a desired behavior, you can begin by reinforcing short durations of the behavior. Then gradually lengthen the criterion.

* * * * *

The Johnsons are shaping the amount of time Ben works on his homework. They use story time as the reinforcer. They found that Ben could often work for 10 or 15 minutes at a time, but seldom more than this. In the beginning, they would reinforce each instance of doing homework that lasted 12 minutes. As Ben began to work for longer intervals, the criterion was changed to 15 minutes, later to 20 minutes, and then 30 minutes. This process took several weeks.

* * * * *

To increase the **accuracy** of a desired behavior, you can teach your child to modify his performance until it achieves the desired result.

* * * * *

Doug is extremely shy and has difficulty making friends. Doug's mother wanted to help him play with other children at the park. She would take him for ice cream on days that he would swing on the swing next to another child. After he'd done this three times, she reinforced him only if he said, "Hi!" to the other child. After three days of saying "Hi!" she would reinforce him only after he said, "My name is Doug. What's your's?" She plans to continue until Doug can initiate a game and play for a short time with this new friend.

* * * * *

To increase the **speed** with which your child performs a certain behavior, look at the rate at which your child is performing the task. First, determine how long it normally takes your child. Then, set a reinforcement criterion for your child to complete the task slightly under this time and tell the child to see how fast she can go. You can use a kitchen timer to show him what the goal is. If he "beats the clock," reinforce him. As he speeds up with each attempt, make the criterion time shorter until the task is completed in a reasonable amount of time.

* * * * *

Pat dawdles when he should be getting dressed. It takes him 40 minutes to do what his younger sister does in 10 minutes. His mother plans to first reinforce him for getting ready in 35 minutes, then for 30 minutes, then 25 minutes, and so on until he gets ready in an acceptable amount of time.

* * * * *

If your child does not meet the criterion several times in a row, revise the criterion so that you can continue to provide some reinforcement. You can break down the task into small, achievable steps (as described in Chapter 2). For instance, earning a token for picking up all of the toys on the floor may be too great a demand on the child who will not pick up even a single toy. You could require that only a few items be picked up, and then reinforce with a token for each item picked up.

Take care, however, not to revise the criterion during or immediately after an attempt to perform the desired behavior. For example, don't say, "Well, you didn't beat the clock, but I'm going to give you the reward anyhow for trying." While this may seem to be a sensitive way of shaping behavior, it is more likely that your child is shaping your behavior than vice versa!

Activity 5.3 allows you to use the methods discussed above to shape one of your child's behaviors.

ACTIVITY 5.3

Most activities of daily living can be taught by shaping. Pick from the list below or choose any behavior of your child's that you feel needs to be changed in terms of accuracy, duration, or speed.

* Remaining seated at meals
* Getting ready for school on time
* Reading
* Doing homework
* Waiting for a turn
* Practicing music lessons
* Doing chores
* Talking with others
* Bathing

USING TOKEN REINFORCERS

A token reinforcer is any object--a star, sticker, or I.O.U--that can be traded in for some other reinforcer. Whatever the tokens are exchanged for has already been identified as a reinforcer. An advantage of token systems is you can give token reinforcers almost anywhere at any time. Unlike food or activity reinforcers, you can give tokens quickly, without interrupting the task at hand. Because your child must save the tokens to trade in on something else, he doesn't lose interest or become bored too soon. Thus, your child can earn five or six tokens in an hour and still be motivated to earn more. If you used food reinforcers that often, you would expect him to lose interest in continuing the task or behavior.

Another advantage of token reinforcers is that they can create an economy or system of exchange which in itself can be educational to a child. The system of using charts or tokens is like the adult system of earning money for performing certain tasks. As you develop a system of token reinforcement, you can give different amounts of tokens, depending upon the response you want, the age of your child, or the amount of progress your child is making.

You can also use a variety of reinforcers and allow your child to choose from a "menu" of previously agreed-upon reinforcers. This also helps prevent him from getting tired of the same reinforcer as well as allows him to make choices, which is often reinforcing in itself.

* * * * *

This week Don's reinforcer menu consists of:

Play basketball with his Dad	*10 stars*
Rent a movie	*10 stars*
Have a friend over	*10 stars*
Play a video game	*2 stars*

* * * * *

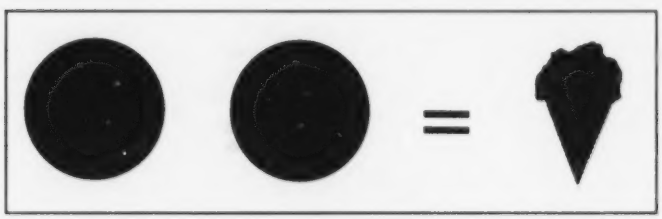
Tokens are also useful in teaching a child to wait, a skill that is often difficult to learn. Tokens also serve as reminders of what the child needs to do to complete a task. For instance, if a child sees that he only needs to fill in two circles to earn an activity reinforcer, he may be more likely to continue to respond.

DEVISING A TOKEN SYSTEM

Token systems can be simple or complex. It is best to start with a simple system and advance as the child is able. Some type of token system is appropriate for almost any child. The systems shown below use either stickers, checks, or points. Some parents find small game pieces or poker chips to be effective. Whatever you use, tokens must be traded in for another reinforcer to retain their effectiveness. At first it may seem that the tokens are reinforcing enough alone, but after some time the novelty wears off and they no longer work to increase a child's behavior.

The token is given immediately after a child completes the specified behavior. At first, the exchange of the token for the backup reinforcer should occur shortly after the desired behavior occurs. After your child has used the system for awhile, you can extend the time he keeps the token. For example, you may require him to earn a week's worth of tokens before being able to trade them in for another reinforcer.

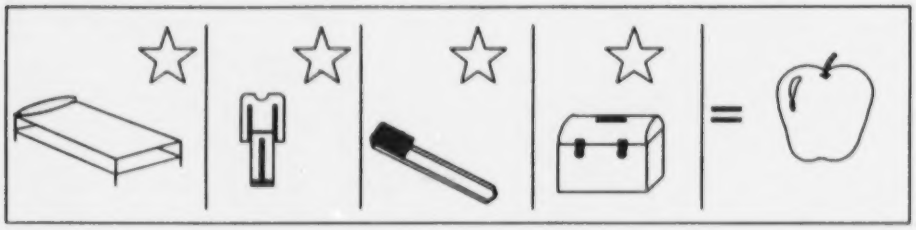
* * * * *



Here, Michael must share with his brother two times, earning two stickers to trade in for the ice cream cone. A picture of the backup reinforcer shows him what he may get for trading in his tokens.

* * * * *

* * * * *



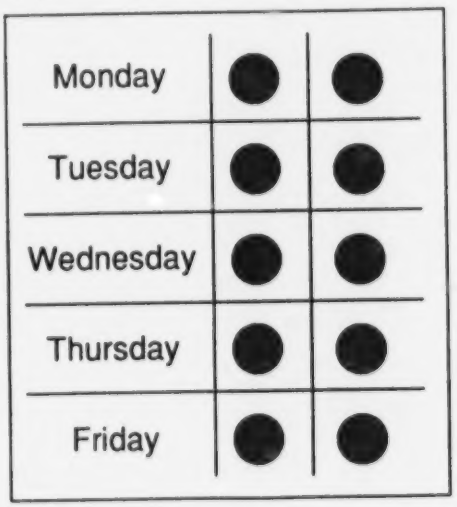
In this chart, the desired behaviors are pictured on the chart. This is helpful when several behaviors must be performed in the same order each day--getting ready for school each day. All of the behaviors are required before the backup reinforcer is available.

* * * * *

The boxes in this chart represent days of the week. In this example, it is possible to earn one sticker a day. When the specified number of stickers is earned, the chart may be traded in for a treat--a trip to a local fast food restaurant.

* * * * *

In this example, two behaviors are required for each day. For charts of this type, carefully choose the criterion for exchange and make sure the child understands it. For instance, in this example, the criterion might be to earn eight or more stickers. For some children, it may be necessary to set the criterion low at first and then to gradually increase it.



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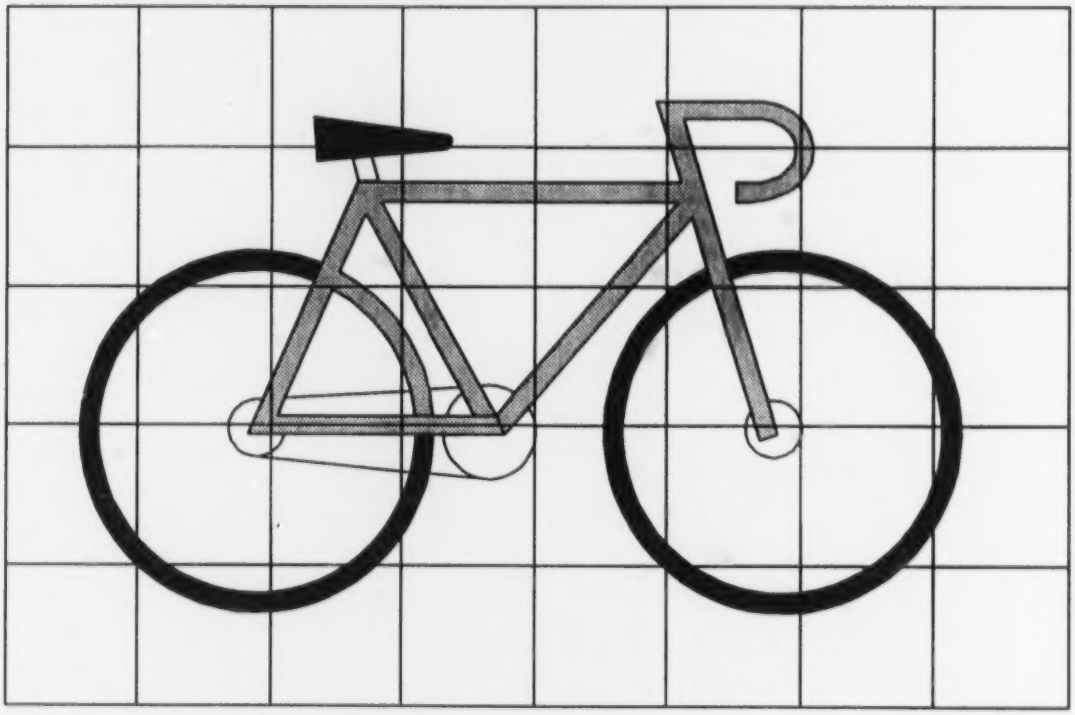
* * * * *



The picture in this example represents the ultimate trade-in (the backup reinforcer). Since the object is somewhat expensive, more desired behaviors are required. After a child completes a single behavior that his parents want to reinforce, he is given a sticker to put in one square of the "token bank." Or, he might color in a square, or remove sticker(s) earned from a chart that has been covered with stickers. Once the chart is complete, the trade-in can occur.

* * * * *

* * * * *

Point System								
What Hugh does	How many points	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
Gets dressed by self	10	10	10					
Cleans up after breakfast	5	5		5				
Remembers books & lunch for school	5		5	5				
No tantrums in school	10		10					
No tantrums after school	10		10	10				
Plays with sister without fighting	5	5		5				
Cleans up after dinner	5	5	5	5				
Goes to bed without complaining	10							
BONUS	0-15		5					
TOTAL		35	45	30				

In this example Hugh earns points for meeting specific requirements each day. The number of points for each task varies depending upon the difficulty for Hugh. Each day his parents list the total number of points earned. At a later time, the points may be traded in for privileges agreed upon earlier or for other reinforcers. The particular tasks chosen and the number of points assigned to each task may change.

* * * * *

The token system you are using with your child should be carefully planned and regularly reviewed. It is important to continually assess the behavior required, the schedule of rewards, and the choice of backup reinforcers.

Your child's behavior is the best index of whether the system is working. If the desired behavior occurs less and less frequently, if backup reinforcers are not in

demand, or if your child seems uninterested, it is time to examine your system and review the guidelines for using token reinforcers. You may want to have a weekly "conference" with your child to discuss progress and to hear your child's suggestions.

DECREASING BEHAVIORS

The focus of this book has been the use of positive approaches in parenting, both to teach new behaviors and to decrease inappropriate behaviors. Through discussions of antecedents, reinforcement, and shaping, we have stressed simple, effective, positive techniques that parents can use with their children. While there is little question that punishment is an effective means of decreasing behavior, some problems with punishment occur and should be understood. In the following section, we discuss various ways to decrease negative behavior--removing the reinforcers for negative behaviors, increasing other positive behaviors, and using punishment.

Removing Reinforcers

The learning principles we have presented apply to undesirable behavior as well as to desirable behavior. Antecedents set the stage for a behavior to occur. The behavior occurs and is then followed by a consequence. If this consequence is a reinforcer, the behavior is likely to occur again. Reinforcement can maintain undesirable behavior as well as desirable behavior.

* * * * *

On the way home in the car, Dick used a swear word to describe his teacher. His two sisters began to giggle, so he said it again. As the giggling got louder, Dick's swear words increased until his mother stopped the car.

* * * * *

If you can identify what is reinforcing an undesirable behavior and you take away that reinforcer, you will lessen the chances that the behavior will occur again. Several factors, however, may make this difficult: 1) not all reinforcers are easy to recognize--a glance or smile may be enough to reinforce a behavior; 2) not all reinforcers can be easily controlled by parents (as in the example of Dick above); and 3) a behavior which is reinforced only occasionally is likely to last a long time, once the reinforcer is withdrawn.

* * * * *

Dan begged and pouted when his mom wouldn't buy him a candy bar while they were at the grocery store. After so much begging, his mom finally gave in and bought Dan the candy bar.

* * * * *

In the previous example, Dan's begging paid off, so he is likely to do it again. His mom was so tired of Dan's begging that when she bought the candy and Dan was quiet, his mom was also reinforced. Sometimes this is called a "reinforcement trap," because in the end, the parent may become "trapped" into teaching the child to misbehave.

Since most children's behavior is reinforced by their parents' attention, removing that attention is an effective way to decrease those behaviors. This means you may have to ignore your child's undesirable behavior--not an easy task for you.

Reinforcing Other Behaviors

One way to decrease the rate of an unwanted behavior is to increase the amount of time your child is engaged in other desired behaviors. Reinforce your child for doing anything **other** than the unwanted behavior.

* * * * *

John is disliked because he is critical of everything. His mother has begun reinforcing him for every conversation that he has in which he does not find fault with anything or anybody. He is reinforced for making positive comments about anything, asking questions, telling about an event, or anything else that does not involve pointing out something negative. His positive conversations have increased, and he spends less time being critical of others.

* * * * *

Providing token reinforcers works well with this kind of procedure. You can divide a day or a portion of a day into consecutive time periods. Then give a star, a check mark, or a token for each time period in which the unwanted behavior does not occur. The time periods should be long enough so that the procedure is easy to use, but short enough that your child can frequently earn a token.

Another version of this procedure involves reinforcing a behavior which is incompatible with an unwanted behavior. For example, reinforcing sitting will decrease standing simply because the two activities can't occur at the same time. Likewise, reinforcing talking quietly will decrease yelling. Be sure that the "appropriate" behavior is one that you would want occurring all the time. If you reinforce a child for watching television rather than running through the house making noise, you need to be sure that television watching is a behavior you want to increase. In this case, it may be better to reinforce another desirable behavior, such as playing a quiet game with a family member.

* * * * *

Gary's whining was very bothersome to his family. His parents used an outline to devise the following plan:

1. *Select the problem behavior to be changed.*

   Whining

2. *Define what you want your child to do instead.*

   Tell what he wants in a normal tone of voice

3. *List the reinforcers you will use, along with praise.*

   Play cards
   Bake cookies
   Go rollerskating

4. *Decide how many times, or for how long, your child must do the positive behavior before earning the reward. If tokens are used, how many must your child earn?*

   20 tokens for playing cards
   25 tokens for baking cookies
   40 tokens for rollerskating

5. *Decide when your child can receive the activity, privilege, or reward.*

   Tokens can be traded in each evening for playing cards or baking cookies.
   Tokens can be traded in any Saturday afternoon for rollerskating.

6. *Explain the plan to your child.*

* * * * *

Activity 5.4 contains a form that will assist you in planning for changes in your child's behavior.

ACTIVITY 5.4

1. Select one problem behavior to be changed.

   _____

2. Define what you want your child to do instead.

   _____

3. List the reinforcers you will use, along with praise.

   _____

   _____

   _____

4. Decide how many times or for how long your child must do the positive behavior before earning the reward. If tokens are used, how many must your child earn?

   _____

   _____

5. Decide when your child can receive the activity, privilege, or reward.

   _____

6. Explain the plan to your child.

USING PUNISHMENT

Punishment is a procedure which strictly decreases a behavior. A child learns only what he should not do, not what he should do. It should be used sparingly, because it can have a number of side effects. First, if you use physical punishment, you may be teaching your child aggression. Except for perhaps spanking a two year old who runs into the street, physical punishment **should not** be used. Other kinds of punishments are equally effective and are less likely to injure your child. Secondly, to avoid punishment, a child may learn to avoid settings or people that he associates

with punishment. For example, if a child is often punished by teachers, he may become truant or avoid academic activities. Lying, fighting back, and running away are common examples of escape or avoidance behaviors.

Although it's certainly preferable to use the more positive approaches to decrease unwanted behavior, there are certain behaviors and circumstances for which you might consider punishment:

* For behaviors which are dangerous to your child, to others, or to property;

* When your well-planned positive approaches have been tried for a reasonable length of time and have failed to change behavior;

* For behaviors that are so annoying or irritating that they can't be tolerated;

* For inappropriate behaviors which are maintained by reinforcers beyond your control and which are more powerful than any you can provide.

Types of punishment typically used include preventing your child from taking part in an activity or privilege (such as watching television or going to a friend's house) or time-out. Time-out involves removing your child from a reinforcing activity for a specified period of time when he misbehaves, and putting him in a situation where there are no reinforcers. This punishment is successful only to the degree that the situation was truly reinforcing to your child and that, in contrast, the time-out situation is in no way reinforcing to him. The book, *SOS! Help for Parents*, is a good source of information on using time-out.

* * * * *

Allen and his friends were playing outside and having a wonderful time. Allen got very excited and began playing too rough. The second time he wrestled his friend to the ground, his mother sent him to time-out for five minutes. He came into the kitchen and sat in the time-out chair while his friends continued to play without him. When his five-minute timer went off, he went back outside to play.

* * * * *

If you decide to use punishment, there are several general guidelines about its use:

1. Punish immediately. Punishment, like reinforcement, must immediately follow the targeted behavior in order to change it.
2. Avoid gradual increases in the intensity of punishment. Children adapt to punishment, which may lead you to gradually increase the intensity of the punishment to maintain its effectiveness.
3. Be consistent. Apply the punishment whenever the behavior occurs and with consistent intensity.

4. Avoid giving your child a lot of attention when you use punishment.
5. Briefly state why the punishment is occurring. Make this specific to the behavior that is being punished. Avoid arguing with your child or having lengthy discussions.
6. Follow through on the stated punishment. Ignore all threats, insults, or promises of good behavior. Otherwise, your child may learn that your actions are meaningless threats that he can avoid or escape.
7. Allow your child to show some appropriate behavior after being punished before you give him positive attention. Some children learn that punishment is usually followed by a hug or "making up" and they actually seek punishment for this reason.
8. Don't give numerous threats. If you are constantly giving threats, it probably means that the child has learned to ignore the first few threats.
9. Don't punish by taking away something you've given or promised as a reinforcer.
10. Any punishment should include a way to teach more appropriate behaviors.

Punishment can be effective, but you should monitor your use of it to know if it is really teaching your child better behavior. One good way to monitor your use of punishment is to mark down on a calendar each time you use it. If you find that you are using it more and more, it must not be helping.

SUMMARY

This chapter presented some basic principles which underlie most of our learning. We have stressed that people affect each other's behavior, and how both desirable and inappropriate behaviors may be learned by children. We discussed increasing desired behaviors by identifying and providing reinforcers for your child, including using token systems. We also discussed decreasing unwanted behaviors by removing reinforcers for the unwanted behaviors, by reinforcing other behaviors instead of the unwanted behaviors, and by punishing unwanted behaviors. Any approach to decreasing unwanted behaviors should be used in combination with methods to increase positive behavior.

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